

WYCOMBE Wanderers' 'Italian Job' is over. The tourists arrived back last night (Monday) after a highly enjoyable and yet slightly disappointing 10 days in Italy which incorporated the second matches in the Anglo-Italian Tournament.

Socially, the tour was excellent with everyone having more than their fair share of good living. But failure on the field left the tourists thinking of what might have been.

First and foremost, Wycombe have learned that a full strength squad is imperative for matches of this standard. After two wins in England, the Blues were in with a good chance of reaching the final. But with three of last year's regular players missing from the side, their task was made that much more difficult. The players who came instead did their best but the teamwork learned from a season's endeavour was missing.

Secondly, another lesson was that matches of this importance need a good deal of preparation. Before both matches in Pistoia and Teramo, Wycombe's plans went wrong. Take the first match against Pistoiese, whom Wanderers had thrashed 4-0 at Loakes Park. Over an hour's delay at Heathrow meant we didn't arrive at Milan until well after

midnight and we then drove down to Monte Cattini — a coach journey of four hours.

When the players did eventually get to bed they had only a minimum of sleep before setting off for the game. The 1-0 defeat then, was a good result considering all the travelling and one wondered why the game couldn't have been played the following day. Thus refreshed, the result might have been quite different as the Blues only went down to a late goal.

More travelling was involved after the game, this time a five hour coach trip to Riccione on the coast. The players at least had good time to rest for the next game but things again went wrong when we arrived in Teramo, the players having to wait in the town for two hours before being driven to the ground barely an hour before kick-off — again hardly ideal preparation for a match.

This might sound like an excuse but when Teramo scored after only 30

seconds of the game it made one wonder. Actually, on the field, es-

pecially against Teramo, Wanderers sometimes looked out of their class. On home soil, these Italians turn on some brilliant football which makes nonsense of their ultra-defensive tactics when they visited England.

Sports Editor
STUART EARP
reports on the
Blues in Italy



The Teramo game was Brian Lee's last as manager after eight marvellous years while John Delaney, the captain, also played his final match for the Blues before moving to Hayes.

Unlike in most of the other matches, there was no disciplinary trouble. Enfield walked off in their

after the first match in this country. Despite pleas from Isthmian League chairman Barry East, manager Fred Callaghan and his men refused to go onto the field again after two players had been injured. Wycombe behaved themselves well on the pitch although they must have been sorely tempted to make an issue of the Pistoiese goal which looked clearly offside. The players told me afterwards that the referee had blown for the offence but then changed his mind and awarded the goal.

The Enfield incident and

also the blatant infringement of the laws by the Italians in the first set of matches must throw a question mark on the validity of the competition. Every club had a £500 incentive to avoid bookings and dismissals but the Italians treated the cash as peanuts. I seriously doubt whether any of them will have anything from the sportsmanship awards.

The Anglo-Italian Tournament between professional clubs was terminated a few years ago for this very disciplinary trouble and something must be done to ensure fair play if the competition is to continue at a non-league level.

Should Wycombe be invited to compete again, I feel they will think very seriously about combining the away matches with the club tour. In the pleasant atmosphere of sun and wine it is difficult for even the most dedicated of players to give his best on the field. As manager Brian Lee put it: "Gin and tonics and 80 degree temperatures are not really conducive to football."

Still, when the matches were over, those gin and tonics did go down rather well while all of us can sport good tans after almost constant sunshine in Riccione. John Maskell had a head start by the way, being browner than most of us before we went. But it was Gerry Olsen, a late replacement for Paul Birdseye, who won the 'tan' stakes.

Off the field, in fact, this tour was a real success with the newcomers in the squad all getting on well together.

Oh yes, just one final thing. If anyone needs any logs this winter, contact Jock Sheppard. I shared a room with Jock for the tour and he's been sawing them up all week!

Lessons learned from Wycombe's Italian tour

MONZA TAKE TROPHY

THE first Anglo-Italian Inter-League Semi-Professional Tournament has been won by an Italian club. A.C. Monza took the trophy on Saturday night with a 1-0 victory over Southern League Wimbledon (writes Stuart Earp).

By all accounts this was a deserved victory for the Italians' strongest club, who were beaten 2-1 on aggregate by Wycombe in another tournament last season.

The goal came in the second half from a free kick but, as in keeping with many of the matches in this tournament, the game became over physical. Wimbledon were the main offenders I am told and they had several players booked and one sent off. To their credit, Monza stuck to playing football and for this reason alone, deserve their victory.

A crowd of over 8,000 watched the final at Monza's ground.

Although Wanderers' 1-0 and 3-0 defeats looked poor on paper, it must be remembered that no English club was able to record a win on Italian soil, Wimbledon coming the closest by leading Benevento 1-0 until the closing stages.

One of the best results was Stafford Rangers' 1-1 draw at Monza but Rangers suffered the heaviest defeat at Udinese when they crashed 6-2.

Results: Siracusa 1, Wimbledon 0; Benevento 1, Nuneaton 0; Teramo 3, Wycombe Wanderers 0; Pistoiese 2, Enfield 0 (abandoned after 60 mins); Udinese 2, Scarborough 0; Monza 1, Stafford Rangers 1. **Final:** Monza 1, Wimbledon 0.

HOW THEY FINISHED ENGLISH CLUBS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wimbledon	4	2	1	1	8	2	7
Nuneaton	4	2	1	1	4	1	7
Wycombe	4	2	0	2	6	4	6
Scarborough	4	1	1	2	5	4	4
Stafford	4	1	1	2	6	10	4
Enfield	4	0	2	2	2	5	2

ITALIAN CLUBS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Monza	4	2	2	0	4	2	7
Teramo	4	2	1	1	5	2	7
Pistoiese	4	2	1	1	4	5	7
Udinese	4	2	0	2	10	9	6
Benevento	4	1	1	2	2	6	4
Siracusa	4	1	1	2	1	6	4